



Making a 60 second PSA (Public Service Announcement)

- Who is your “target audience”? No PSA can reach everyone so you have to target. Are you targeting youth? What age group? Are you targeting parents? Parents of what age children?
- What do you want your “target audience to do or not do? For example, quit smoking; don’t start smoking; don’t drink and drive; don’t smoke around children; exercise more
- What do you know about the “target audience” and the behaviors you are addressing? For example, do most of them smoke? Do a lot of them drink to excess? Do they drink and drive?
- Figure out what messages are out there about the behaviors you want to target that work against you. For example, if you want young people not to drink but alcohol is easily available to them or if they are constantly hearing positive messages about alcohol.
- Avoid the use of “fear appeals” (trying to scare people away from smoking or alcohol/drug use) and other heavy-handed tactics (like preaching). Also avoid commanding members of the target audience, such as “DON’T SMOKE!” This can bring about a boomerang effect (opposite from what you want) from adolescents who do not enjoy being told what not to do.
- Consider using PSA’s that model the behaviors you want people to have.
- Never show someone in your PSA doing the kind of behaviors you don’t want your target to do (If you don’t want people to smoke don’t show people smoking. If you don’t want people to drink, don’t show drinking). PSA’s are both verbal and visual. If your verbal message discourages smoking but your visual message shows cigarettes or smoking, you are giving a mixed message.
- Remember that your goal is to change someone’s behavior or inform, not just entertain them. Think about why the target audience is doing what they are currently doing and what would make them change their behavior.